

the way the legislation is. But I think it is a tremendously important bipartisan package that we have. I commend and applaud the work to this point of Senator DODD and Senator SHELBY. They have done very good work. Their staffs worked most all night. And, of course, they have worked all day. Senators SHELBY and DODD were on the telephone last night at midnight trying to work things out. So I appreciate their good, hard work. They have been long-time legislators. As I mentioned, when Senator MCCONNELL and I suggested they come up with a bipartisan package, they are experienced legislators. They both had extensive service in the House of Representatives before coming here. I feel we are in a good spot to be able to deliver a package that will go toward helping Main Street. We helped Wall Street.

We are all glad Bear Stearns was taken care of. But now it is our opportunity to take care of people on Main Street. They deserve that. I am convinced it would be the right thing to do.

As I indicated, we are going to come in at 9:30 tomorrow. I hope this gives everyone an outline of the legislation. I apologize, as I have to do often, that we were not doing more proactive stuff on the floor, but every minute that we were on the floor in the quorum calls or people giving speeches on what they thought should be done with housing or other issues, the staffs and Senators DODD and SHELBY were working very hard to get us to the point where we are tonight.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for a period of up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REPRESSION IN TIBET

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to speak about the situation in Tibet, which has captured the world's attention in recent days and weeks.

For those of us who have visited Tibet, as I did in 1988, and for millions of people here and abroad, the press reports of Chinese police officers arresting and beating Tibetan protesters, and of Tibetans destroying the property of Han Chinese, are deplorable.

Estimates of the number of protesters killed have ranged from 13 to 140, and more than 1,000 arrested. Knowing the way Tibetans have been tortured and mistreated in Chinese prisons, we should be very concerned with the welfare of those in custody.

More than a dozen Han Chinese were reportedly killed and their businesses ransacked and burned. Violent attacks against civilians and their property cannot be justified, even when they

may be prompted by longstanding, legitimate grievances.

For many years, the Chinese Government has been systematically implementing a strategy to destroy Tibetan culture and solidify its control of Tibet.

A flood of Han Chinese into Tibet has fueled an economic boom, but this has also exacerbated tensions between Chinese business owners and the Tibetans who have become increasingly marginalized and discriminated against in their own homeland.

When first asked about the recent violence, Chinese authorities in Beijing and Lhasa insisted that only a handful of agitators were involved and there was no cause for concern.

Then, as photographs were posted on the internet of Tibetans being chased and beaten bloody by baton-wielding, helmeted riot police, the Chinese Government blocked access for journalists and blamed the Dalai Lama for instigating the violence to sabotage the Beijing Olympics.

Many of us have had the privilege of meeting the Dalai Lama. I consider him a friend, and last week I spoke by telephone with one of his advisors, Lodi Ghari, who was in India at the time. It is outrageous to suggest that the Dalai Lama has encouraged violence in Tibet.

For decades, the Dalai Lama has shown remarkable tolerance and patience as he has sought a peaceful resolution of the conflict over Tibet's political status. He has repeatedly extended a hand of friendship to the Chinese Government, which has consistently responded by denigrating and misrepresenting the Dalai Lama's views.

I would like to hope that this latest outbreak of violence will cause the Chinese Government to recognize that a strategy of repression in Tibet will only provoke further tensions and violence. Brute force is not a solution. Ethnic cleansing is not a solution.

Several things should be done immediately.

The Chinese Government should distinguish between peaceful protestors and rioters, and reaffirm that it will uphold the Chinese Constitution's protections of free speech and association.

It should end its lockdown on Tibetan areas, including allowing full access by the media, and account for those who are missing and dead from the protests.

There should be a full accounting of each Tibetan who has been arrested or charged with a crime, including names, charges if any, and the location where they are being detained. The International Red Cross should have access to monitor their treatment.

The only way to resolve this conflict is through dialogue conducted in good faith. It is long past time for Chinese authorities to recognize that it has nothing to fear from the Tibetan people if they respect the Tibetans' cultural identity.

There has been much talk and speculation about what these events could mean for the Beijing Olympics.

I am not among those who believe the Olympic Games should be a political issue. The Olympics should be about the athletes, not about governments.

If some countries boycott these Olympics for one reason, other countries will feel justified in boycotting other Olympics for different reasons. The future of the Olympic Games would be in jeopardy.

That said, the Chinese Government obviously sees the Olympics as an opportunity to showcase China as a modern, harmonious country. The Chinese Government's actions in Tibet, and its continuing crackdown on dissidents who call for more political freedom, starkly contradict this image.

Apparently, neither the Olympic Committee nor the White House impressed upon the Chinese authorities that if the Olympics were to be a success, there needs to be a marked improvement in China's respect for human rights. That message should be conveyed clearly, vigorously, and immediately. It is not acceptable for President Bush to simply say he plans to attend the Olympics as a "sports fan."

I have long criticized the Chinese Government's violations of human rights.

Its detention and trial on trumped up charges of dissidents who dare to criticize official corruption and repression.

Its use of excessive force in Tibet.

Its support for the Government of Sudan, even while that government was committing genocide in Darfur.

Its torture of prisoners and summary executions after unfair trials.

I, with former Senator Jeffords, and then Representative SANDERS, worked for 6 years to secure the release from a Chinese prison of Ngawang Choepel, a young Tibetan whose only crime was to use a video camera to record Tibetan music and dance. He posed no threat to China's security. His arrest, his trial, and his imprisonment were a travesty.

Just last week, China convicted a human rights activist named Hu Jia of "inciting subversion" through his writings on the internet. His crime was to advocate for better protection for people with AIDS, for more religious freedom, and for increased autonomy for Tibet.

His case is another reminder that when it comes to human rights, little has changed in China. The Chinese Government insists that China is a country of laws and that his case was dealt with according to the law. That is reminiscent of those who once defended slavery because it was lawful at the time. As long as the Chinese Government criminalizes speech, it will face the criticism of the international community.

Criticizing the Chinese Government is not the same as isolating China, which I have never believed is an option. I have visited China several times and have always favored more engagement with China. We should be encouraging closer relations.

I have worked to increase funding for professional, educational, and cultural exchanges, and for programs focusing on environmental protection and the rule of law. I have seen the benefits to American and Chinese students who participate in these programs, including from the Vermont Law School.

China has an extraordinary history and culture. Its people have suffered many hardships, including devastating wars and famines. Many still toil from dawn until dusk to survive, but China has made extraordinary progress in the 30 years since my first trip there.

The Chinese people want the best for their families and their country, as Americans do. They also want a government that is less corrupt and more open and accountable.

China wants to be treated like a great power, but the Chinese Government cannot expect to be respected as a world leader just because of China's large population and its economic and military prowess. Not as long as it crushes peaceful dissent and, in Tibet, destroys the culture of a unique people who are admired throughout the world.

Other governments of countries where Tibetans have rallied peacefully in support of those back home should also stop the arrests and detentions and use of excessive force.

This is particularly so in Nepal, where not long ago tens of thousands of Nepalese people took to the streets in demonstrations which led to the restoration of multi-party government. Those who are in power in Nepal today, because of the people's brave defiance of a corrupt, abusive king, should be respecting the Tibetans' rights of assembly, of association and expression.

Speaker PELOSI, who visited the Dalai Lama recently, said it well when she called the crisis in Tibet a matter of conscience for the world.

But just as I believe our collective conscience must be steadfast in support of the Tibetan people and their spiritual leader, so should we reaffirm that we recognize this is a conflict the Chinese and Tibetans must solve themselves.

I believe a solution is possible that meets the needs and aspirations of both peoples. But after 6 years of talks that have achieved nothing, it is clear that a new approach is needed. Repression is not the answer. Confrontation is not the answer.

There are creative, visionary people on both sides who can learn from these events and pursue a new way forward. Those of us half a world away who care about Tibet and China should encourage that.

Unfortunately, rather than reach out directly to the Dalai Lama, the Chinese authorities are already tightening their control of Tibet. Apparently they have concluded that the lesson of this latest uprising is to increase the repression and claim that everything is back to normal.

Their idea of what is "normal" in Tibet is not the answer. If that is the

path they take, it is only a matter of time before the next eruption of violence. And in the meantime, China will further jeopardize the Olympics and do more damage to its international reputation.

Nobody wants that. We want closer, cooperative relations with China.

Mr. President, let us hope that years from now, the 29th Summer Olympic Games will be remembered not for the violent images of recent weeks, and not for a hardening of positions, but as the catalyst for a new political dialogue that brought about a lasting agreement on Tibet's future.

IRAQI REFUGEES RESETTLE IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, at a time when we are all concerned with the fate of Iraqi refugees and the need to help as many of them as possible resettle in safe havens, I ask unanimous consent that a March 24, 2008, article in the Brattleboro Reformer entitled "Difficult Choices: Son's Birth Deepens Couple's Concern Over Future," be printed in the RECORD.

This article illustrates what Vermonters are doing to help two Iraqi refugees, Revan Hedo and Aseel Pola, who recently gave birth to Brattleboro, Vermont's first Iraqi-American citizen, Matthew. As Vermonters and other Americans open their hearts, their homes, and their wallets to try to alleviate the suffering of Iraqis who have been forced to flee their homeland to escape the violence, it is an important reminder that no matter how one may feel about this war, there is a humanitarian dimension that requires everyone's attention. I am proud that Vermonters are doing their part.

We all hope that some day Iraq will be safe enough for those who want to return home to do so. But there are some 2 million Iraqi refugees stranded in Jordan, Syria, and other countries, and millions more displaced inside Iraq. Only a tiny fraction of those who need and deserve our help have received U.S. visas. This is unconscionable. I urge the White House to expedite the processing for resettlement of Iraqis whose lives are threatened because they had the courage to serve as translators, drivers, and provide other services to the United States. These people risked their lives for us, and they have every reason to expect that we will not abandon them.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Reformer, Mar. 24, 2008.]

DIFFICULT CHOICES—SON'S BIRTH DEEPENS COUPLE'S CONCERN OVER FUTURE

(By Bob Audette)

BRATTLEBORO.—One year ago today, Iraqi natives Revan Hedo and Aseel Pola were married in their home country.

Ten days ago, Aseel gave birth to a baby boy, Matthew, the first Iraqi-American born

in Brattleboro. His birth heralded a new chapter in the lives of Hedo and Pola, a Catholic couple with family in Iraq but no safe home to return to.

While Matthew is guaranteed a life in the United States by right of his birth, his parents may one day have to return to the Middle East—with or without their son—when their visas expire.

"My son is a U.S. citizen," said Hedo, proudly.

Hedo, now 29, first came to the United States in 2004 on a Fulbright scholarship with which he earned a master's degree in comparative literature and simultaneous translation from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He returned to Iraq in 2006 and married Pola. In August 2007, he and his new wife returned to the states, so he could earn a master's in the Art of Education at the School for International Training Graduate Institute.

As an Iraqi, he served as an interpreter for U.S. forces, translating for high-ranking officials such as L. Paul Bremer, Gen. John Abizaid and England Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. One reason for renewing his visa was because living in Iraq had become too dangerous for him and his new wife.

"My life was in jeopardy," he said. "Everyone knew I had been to the United States and had been working for U.S. military forces."

Francis Bailey, an associate professor at UMass, who befriended Hedo during his two years in Amherst, offered the couple a place to live rent free. Bailey was teaching at SIT and offered to sponsor the couple's stay in the United States.

"I was frustrated with the decision to invade Iraq," said Bailey. Giving Hedo and Pola a place to live was "an opportunity to make an individual difference," said Bailey. "This was my choice."

Because of the danger to him, his wife and their new son, returning to Iraq is out of the question, but barring some miracle, they can't legally remain in the United States after their visas expire. Even having a son with American citizenship doesn't guarantee the couple can stay here.

Financially, things have also been difficult for the couple.

Pola, a microbiologist, doesn't work, and Hedo's visa only allows him to work 10 hours a week in SIT's library, not nearly enough money to pay for the daily necessities, never mind the bill at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital for the birth of their son. While Hedo has insurance through SIT, Pola has no coverage.

The congregation at St. Michael's Catholic Church on Walnut Street has been essential in helping the couple keep their heads above water as has the international community on the campus of SIT.

"Our friends at SIT showed us the spirit of diversity, the respect of other cultures and hospitality," said Hedo, adding, "The neighbors are wonderful. They've really supported us, especially emotionally."

"The town is very nice and beautiful," said Pola. "People are really friendly."

Her biggest hope for her son is that he grows up in a family with both a mother and a father. Pola's father spent several years as a prisoner of war during the Iraq-Iran War of the 1980s. In 2001, when she was 19, he was shot dead on his front steps by minions of Saddam Hussein.

One day, they hope to return to Iraq, but right now they consider their trip to the United States "a one-way ticket," said Hedo. "We can't go back."

"We want to be able to live in peace (in Iraq)," he said. "To be respected no matter what our beliefs are. We would love to live in an environment with a lot of tolerance, just like Brattleboro."